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FM THE SITUATION ROOM//TOMAK 29//

UNCLAS VIA BLACK PATCH WH00568

MR. FORD WAS REMINDED THAT HE'D SAID AFTER HIS DEFEAT OF RONALD REAGAN IN THE WISCONSIN REPUBLICAN PRIMARY THAT "I THOUGHT THAT THE RESULTS IN WISCONSIN CERTAINLY FULLY JUSTIFIED MY FAITH IN HENRY KISSINGER" AND THAT "MY FULL SUPPORT FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER IS FORTIFIED BY THE DECISION IN WISCONSIN - THE POINT BEING THAT REAGAN HAD DELIVERED A SAVAGE ATTACK ON KISSINGER JUST BEFORE THE WISCONSIN PRIMARY. WOULD A SERIOUS LOSS TO REAGAN IN TEXAS, WHERE REAGAN WAS PRESSING HIS ATTACK ON KISSINGER AS AN APPEASER AND BETRAYER OF AMERICAN INTERESTS, LEAD THE PRESIDENT TO CONCLUDE THAT KISSINGER WAS TOO MUCH OF A POLITICAL LIABILITY TO RETAIN DURING THE REST OF THIS CAMPAIGN YEAR? ALTHOUGH THE FACT WAS NOT MENTIONED TO THE PRESIDENT, KISSINGER WAS WONDERING ABOUT THAT AND WAS PREPARED TO QUIT IF HE WERE ASKED TO. MR. FORD SAID THERE WAS NO SUCH POSSIBILITY, NO SUCH THOUGHT IN HIS MIND. THE WISCONSIN AND TEXAS PRIMARIES WERE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT. WISCONSIN WAS A HEAD-TO-HEAD PREFERENTIAL CONTEST. THE TEXAS PRIMARY WOULD BE A CONTEST FOR DELEGATES AND NOT A DIRECT PREFERENTIAL CONFRONTATION. SO THE PRESIDENT WOULDN'T READ THE TEXAS RESULT AS A VOTE FOR OR AGAINST KISSINGER, HOWEVER FORD AND REAGAN FARED. ANYHOW, THE PRESIDENT SAID, THE POLLS CONTINUED TO SHOW AND HE CONTINUED TO REGARD HENRY KISSINGER AS A POLITICAL ASSET, NOT AS A POLITICAL LIABILITY.

DID ALL THIS MEAN THAT THE PRESIDENT WANTED KISSINGER TO REMAIN IN THE OFFICE AND WANTED HIM TO CONTINUE AS SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE NEXT FORD TERM IF THERE IS ONE? THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE WANTED KISSINGER TO STAY AND THAT ALL HE'D BEEN SAYING APPLIES TO THE NEXT TERM. FINALLY, TO WHAT EXTENT HAD HE AND KISSINGER GONE INTO THE SUBJECT OF KISSINGER'S FUTURE? THE PRESIDENT SAID HE'D SAID TO KISSINGER IN PRIVATE WHAT HE'D BEEN SAYING PUBLICLY AND THAT KISSINGER HAD SAID THAT HE'D QUIT WHENEVER THE PRESIDENT CONCLUDED THAT HE WAS A POLITICAL LIABILITY OR INEFFECTIVE FOR ANY OTHER REASON. THAT, THE PRESIDENT SAID, WAS ABOUT AS FAR AS THEIR DISCUSSIONS HAD GONE.

IT'S PLAIN TO KISSINGER ASSOCIATES WHO DEAL REGULARLY AND INTIMATELY WITH HIM THAT, WHATEVER ASSURANCES HE MAY HAVE FROM THE PRESIDENT, THE CONSTANT BARRAGE OF SPECULATION AND THE ATTACKS FROM THE REAGAN RIGHT KEEP HIM ON EDGE. PERSONAL SENSITIVITIES APART, AND HENRY KISSINGER IS ABUNDANTLY EQUIPPED WITH THEM, HE CONSIDERS WITH REASON THAT THE SPECULATION AND THE ATTACKS IN COMBINATION DIMINISH HIS EFFECTIVENESS WITH

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OTHER GOVERNMENTS. LESSER WORRIES GNAW AT HIM: AMONG OTHERS, THE FLAWEED WORD PORTRAIT OF HIM IN THE WIDELY READ AND QUOTED WOODWARD-BERNSTEIN BOOK, THE FINAL DAYS, AND THE DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT HE MAY EVENTUALLY BE HELD LIABLE FOR HUGE CIVIL DAMAGES AS A RESULT OF THE SUIT BROUGHT AGAINST HIM AND OTHERS BY MORTON HALPERIN, A FORMER ASSISTANT WHO WAS WIRETAPPED IN 1969-71. YET KISSINGER SUSTAINS AT LEAST A SEMBLANCE OF HIS OLD ELAN. AT THIS WRITING HE IS ABOUT TO BE OFF ON HIS FIRST TOUR OF AFRICA, AND HE SOON WILL BE REVISITING LATIN AMERICA. AT HOME HE IS OFTEN ON THE ROAD, DEFINING AND DEFENDING FORD-KISSINGER FOREIGN POLICY IN SPEECHES, QUESTION-ANSWER EXCHANGES WITH HIS AUDIENCES, AND PRIVATE SESSIONS WITH LOCAL LEADERSHIP GROUPS. THESE EXPEDITIONS REFRESH HIM AND, PARTICULARLY AT THE LEADERSHIP SESSIONS, HE IMPRESSES OTHERWISE CRITICAL HEARERS. IN PHOENIX ON APRIL 16, FOR INSTANCE, AN EDITOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE ARIZONA REPUBLIC ATTENDED A LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION AND WROTE AFTERWARD THAT KISSINGER "APPARENTLY CHOOSES TO FILL HIS PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS WITH ELOQUENT PLATITUDES AND HIS OFF-THE-RECORD PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH EARTHY, DIRECT AND UNMISTAKABLY REVEALING GRASPS OF THE CRISES BREWING AROUND AMERICAN SHORES." KISSINGER'S PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS ARE NEITHER ALL THAT ELOQUENT NOR ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM HIS PRIVATE POINTS, BUT THE EDITOR WAS CORRECT IN HIS PERCEPTION THAT KISSINGER IS "TORMENTED ... BY THE PAINFUL SUSPICION ... THAT AMERICA'S POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS LACK THE RESOLVE AND WILL TO FACE UP TO INTERNATIONAL POWER PRESSURES." IT IS FROM DISTORTED VERSIONS OF KISSINGER'S PRIVATE TALK TO THIS EFFECT THAT RONALD REAGAN, RETIRED ADM. ELMO ZUNWALT, JR., AND OTHER CRITICS DERIVE THEIR MISTAKEN IMPRESSION AND CHARGE THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS RELEGATED THE US TO "SECOND PLACE" IN THE WORLD.

AT AN EARLIER LEADERSHIP SESSION IN BOSTON, KISSINGER PROVIDED AN INTERESTING INSIGHT INTO HIS THINKING ABOUT HIS OWN AND THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION'S FUTURE. A GUEST ASKED WHOM HE WOULD RECOMMEND TO THE NEXT PRESIDENT AS THE NEXT SECRETARY OF STATE. KISSINGER ANSWERED "AND HERE I WRITE WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT SECOND-HAND ACCOUNTS OF THIS KIND CAN BE NO BETTER THAN APPROXIMATELY ACCURATE " THAT IT WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER THE NEXT PRESIDENT IS A REPUBLICAN OR A DEMOCRAT AND ON WHAT THE PRESIDENT'S PRIORITIES ARE. IF THE NEXT PRESIDENT IS A REPUBLICAN AND HIS FIRST DESIRE IS FOR A SECRETARY OF STATE WHO THINKS CONCEPTUALLY ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY AND WOULD BE GOOD AT HELPING THE

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PRESIDENT FORMULATE IT, KISSINGER PROBABLY WOULD RECOMMEND ELLIOT RICHARDSON. IF THE FIRST NEED WERE FOR A SECRETARY OF STATE WHO COULD EFFECTIVELY EXPLAIN AND DEFEND FOREIGN POLICY TO CONGRESS, KISSINGER WOULD RECOMMEND MELVIN LAIRD. IF THE FIRST REQUIREMENT WERE FOR A SECRETARY WHO COULD EXPLAIN AND DEFEND POLICY TO BOTH CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC, KISSINGER'S CHOICE WOULD BE JOHN CONNALLY. IF THE DEMAND WERE FOR A SECRETARY WHO WOULD BE REASONABLY GOOD AT ALL OF THESE THINGS - THINKING OUT, FORMULATING, EXPLAINING AND DEFENDING POLICY - HE WOULD RECOMMEND HIS FRIEND AND SOMETIME PATRON, VICE PRESIDENT NELSON ROCKEFELLER. KISSINGER SAID THAT HE'D BE IN MORE DIFFICULTY IF THE NEXT PRESIDENT IS A DEMOCRAT. TO THE EXTENT THAT HE HAD THOUGHT THIS CONTINGENCY THROUGH, AND HE HADN'T THOUGHT IT THROUGH VERY FAR, HE PROBABLY AND RATHER RELUCTANTLY WOULD RECOMMEND FORMER AMBASSADOR AND DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CYRUS VANCE.

IT WAS INTERESTING THAT KISSINGER, WHO MUST ASSUME THAT IF THE NEXT PRESIDENT IS A REPUBLICAN HE WILL BE GERALD FORD, DIDN'T SO MUCH AS HINT THAT IN THAT EVENT HE'D RECOMMEND HIMSELF. MANY OF HIS FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES ARE CONVINCED THAT HE'S MADE UP HIS MIND TO DECLINE REAPPOINTMENT IN THE NEXT TERM IF MR. FORD IS THE PRESIDENT AND OFFERS IT TO HIM. THE QUESTION REMAINS (AND I DON'T THINK IT'S A SERIOUS QUESTION) WHETHER KISSINGER AT THE CRUNCH CAN BRING HIMSELF TO FOREGO THE DELIGHTS AND POMPS OF POWER. A FRIEND WHO BELIEVES THAT HE WILL FOREGO ALL THAT IF HE HAS THE CHOICE, AND DEVOUTLY HOPES THAT HE WILL HAVE THE SENSE TO DO IT, IS MELVIN LAIRD. LAIRD FIGURED IN KISSINGER'S DECISION AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST TO REMAIN IN THE OFFICE AFTER LAST JANUARY 1, WHEN HE HAD INTENDED TO QUIT, REASONING THAT IT WAS THE RIGHT TIME, BOTH FROM HIS AND MR. FORD'S STANDPOINTS, FOR HIM TO GO. HE SUBMITTED A LETTER OF RESIGNATION TO THE PRESIDENT. LIKE RICHARD NIXON IN LATE 1970, MR. FORD URGED HIM TO RECONSIDER AND STAY ON. KISSINGER THOUGHT IT OVER DURING A SHORT VACATION IN THE CARIBBEAN AND, WHEN HE RETURNED, DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH LAIRD. LAIRD URGED HIM TO STAY THROUGH THIS TERM BUT TO MAKE UP HIS MIND, AND TO TELL THE PRESIDENT, THAT IT WOULD BE TIME FOR HIM TO GO AT THE END OF THE TERM. LAIRD HAD THIS HISTORY IN MIND WHEN HE SAID IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION AT A UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN STUDENT SESSION RECENTLY THAT HE EXPECTS KISSINGER TO LEAVE AT THE END OF THE TERM. LAIRD WAS SIGNALLING KISSINGER, NOT THE PRESIDENT. MR. FORD KNOWS THAT LAIRD HAS SO ADVISED KISSINGER. I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW THAT THERE IS A

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CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE FACTS AND THE PRESIDENT'S  
GENEROUS INDICATION THAT HE'D LIKE TO HAVE KISSINGER  
REMAIN INTO THE NEXT TERM.

JOHN OSBORNE

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